THE CAMPUS COMPUTING PROJECT

The 2000 National Survey of Information Technology in US Higher Education

Struggling with IT Staffing and Support

The growing demand for IT talent across all sectors of the booming economy poses significant staffing challenges for US colleges and universities, according to new data from The Campus Computing Project. Campus IT officials place "retaining current IT personnel given off-campus competition" and "helping IT personnel stay current with new technologies" at the top of the list of 27 strategic, budget, and personnel issues confronting their institutions over the next two-three years.

"This year's survey again confirms that the key IT challenges in higher education involve people, not products," says Kenneth C. Green, founder/director of The Campus Computing Project and a visiting scholar at The Center for Educational Studies of Claremont Graduate University in Claremont, CA. "The exploding demand for technical talent means that campus IT personnel can often walk across the street and easily increase their income by 30 or 50 percent or more. The education community — both higher education and K-12 — is at great risk of losing its technology talent to the corporate sector."

Green notes that staffing issues affect user support and the instructional integration of technology across all sectors of higher education. "Even though institutions spend a huge por-

Strategic IT Issues, Fall, 2000

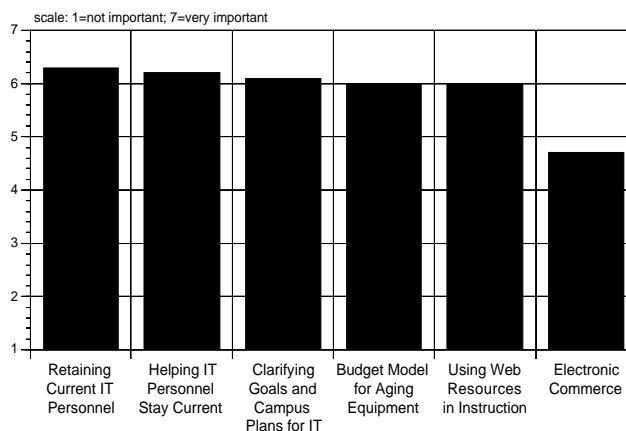scale: 1=not important; 7=very important

tion of their IT budgets on personnel, colleges and universities remain significantly understaffed in the area of user support," reports Green. Citing data from the 2000 Campus Computing Survey, Green comments that user support ratios —the number of technology users to technology support personnel — remain two to five times the level found in comparable corporate environments.
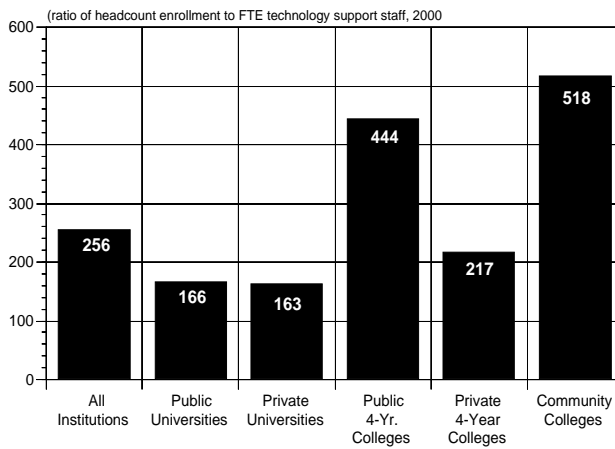
IT Planning Issues

The 2000 survey data also highlight the continuing challenge of IT planning. Two-thirds (64.9 percent) of the campus officials participating in the 2000 Campus Computing Survey report that their institution has a strategic plan for information technology. However, when asked for additional information about these plans, a number of key components appear missing.

"Admittedly, it seems impressive that so many institutions report strategic plans for information technology," says Green. "However, probe just a bit below the surface and it is clear that most colleges and universities do not have a strategic plan for electronic commerce, distance education, campus portal services,

User Support Ratios, 2000

(ratio of headcount enrollment to FTE technology support staff, 2000)

or financing IT costs. These issues are — or should be — core components of a real IT strategic plan." Indeed, the 2000 Campus Computing Survey data reveal that less than a tenth (6.8 percent) of the campuses participating in this year's survey have a strategic plan for electronic commerce; only a eighth (12.6 percent) have a plan for campus portal services, and less than one-third (29.3 percent) report a strategic plan for distance education.

More Technology in the Classroom

Not surprisingly, the 2000 survey reveals that more college courses are using more technology resources. Three-fifths (59.5 percent) of all college courses now utilize electronic mail, up from 54.0 percent last year, 44.0 percent in 1998 and 20.1 percent in 1995. Similarly, two-fifths (42.6 percent) of college courses now use Intrenet-based resources as a component of the syllabus, up from 10.9 in 1995, 33.1 percent in 1998 and 38.9 percent in 1999. Almost a third (30.7 percent) of all college courses have a Web page, compared to 28.1 percent last year, 22.5 percent in 1998 and 9.2 percent in 1996. Concurrently, the 2000 Campus Computing Survey data reveal that almost one-fourth (23.0 percent) of all college faculty have a personal Web page not linked to a specific class or course, compared to just 19.0 percent in 1999.

Reaching a Plateau?

"Although the survey data continue to show gains in the use of technology in the classroom and the role of technology to support instruction and learning, it may be that we are about to reach a temporary plateau," suggests Green. "The Web has been a critical catalyst for many faculty, offering compelling content and technology that they could bring into their teaching and scholarly activities. But there are some real limits. The number of the faculty energized by the
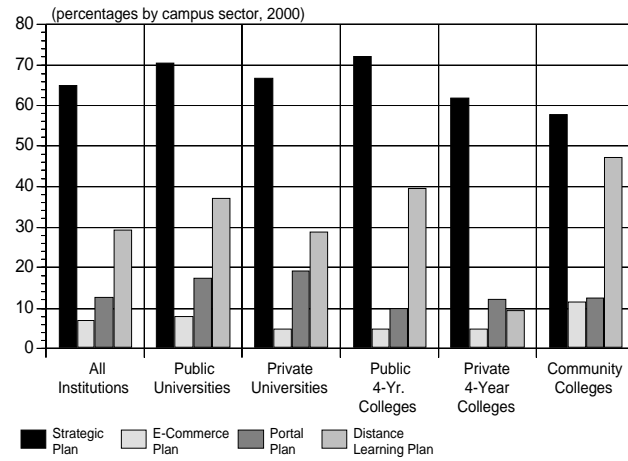
Web and willing to invest time and effort to infuse technology into their instructional activities, often absent adequate institutional support and recognition for their efforts, may begin to level off, a least for a little while." Green cites a similar trend in the

Campus IT Plans

(percentages by campus sector, 2000)

consumer market where growth rates for new users have been slowing in the past year.

Campus Services on the Web

The 2000 survey reveals that more institutions now offer more services

on their Web sites: three-fourths (75.5 percent) of the institutions participating in the 2000 Survey provide online undergraduate applications, up from 69.5 percent in 1999 and 55.4 percent in 1998. Over four-fifths (82.0 percent) make the course catalog available on online, compared to 77.3 percent last year and 65.2 percent in 1998. Course reserves are available on the Web at one-third (35.1 percent) of the institutions in the 2000 survey, up from a fourth in 1999, and 17.9 percent in 1998. And more than half (55.1 percent) of the participants in the 2000 Campus Computing Survey report that their institution currently offers one or more full college courses online via the Web, up from 46.5 percent last year.

Course Management Software

The 2000 Survey includes several new questions about the growing role of Course Management Software in instruction. One-seventh (14.7 percent) of the institutions in the survey report using some type of course man-

agement tool in their online offerings. Yet a clear indicator of the growing importance of these products is that almost three-fifths (57.8 percent) of the survey respondents report that their campus has established a single product standard for course management tools.

Electronic Commerce

The proportion of campuses reporting eCommerce capacity on campus Web sites more than doubled in the past year, rising from 7.6 percent in 1999 to 18.6 percent in 2000. But here as elsewhere, the survey data point to significant differences across campus sectors. Although two-fifths (40.0 percent) of public universities have e-Commerce capacity, just under one-fifth (18.3 percent) of public four-year colleges and about one-sixth (14.8 percent) of community colleges can process course fees via their Web sites. Similarly, while a third (33.3 percent) of private universities can handle tuition payments on the Web, just an eighth (12.4 percent) of private four-year colleges can process Web-based financial transactions.

Green notes that while electronic commerce is exploding in other sectors of the economy, higher education is perhaps two or even three years behind the consumer marketplace. He cites the survey data which indicate that e-Commerce capacity gets the lowest rating of 11 separate campus IT infrastructure measures, just 3.0 on a 7 point scale (1=poor; 7=excellent). Reflecting campus investments over the past decade, survey respondents give their highest ratings to the campus network (5.7), online library and reference resources (5.4) and the telecommunication system (5.3). Other low scoring infra-

structure items include IT training for students (4.1) and campus Web site / student portal services (3.9).

Green wonders about the low priority given to Web-based electronic

Using Technology in the Classroom
Rising Use of Technology in Instruction
(percentage of courses using IT resources)

Categories: E-Mail, Internet Resources, Web Page for Course, Presentation Handouts

Legend: 1994, 1995, 1996, 1997, 1998, 1999, 2000

commece and related services. "Why is it that consumers can go online to review transactions in their checking or credit card accounts but students cannot do the same with a college

"Colleges Should Permit Commercial Advertising on Campus Web Sites/Portals"
(percentage who "agree/strongly agree")

Categories: Public Universities, Private Universities, Public 4-Yr. Colleges, Private 4-Year Colleges, Community Colleges
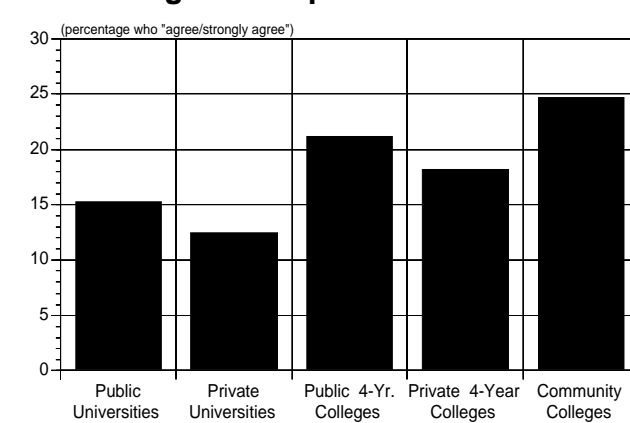
transcript or a tuition statement?" asks Green. "This is a simple yet significant indicator of the eCom-merce and e-Service gap that separates the campus and consumer sectors."

Hostile to Advertising

Yet even as college and university officials expand the services on campus Web sites, it is clear that advertising is one feature most are eager to keep far away from campus Web pages. Less than a fifth (19.5 percent) of the respondents "agree" or "strongly agree" that "colleges should permit commercial advertising on campus web sites and portals." Indeed, more than a third (36.3 percent) of the survey participants "strongly disagree" when asked if advertising is appropriate for college and university Web sites.
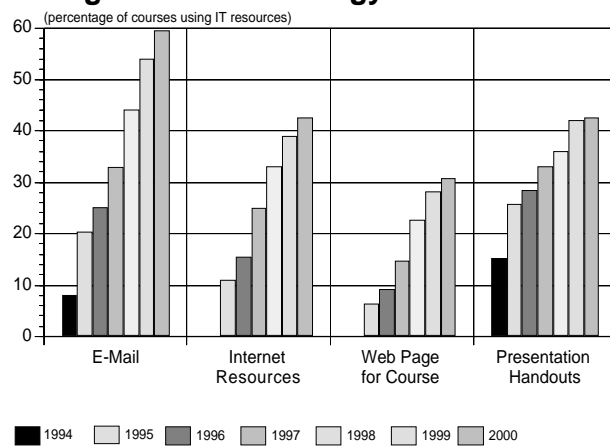
"In the wake of the campus cola wars and what has become the ubiquity of logos on team athletic attire, these data suggest that across all sectors of higher education, IT officials see the Internet and Web as perhaps the last 'logo-free' zone on college campuses," comments Green. "Even though institutions would like additional financial resources to underwrite IT costs and other expenses, it is clear that college IT officials strongly oppose any advertising on campus Web sites and portals."

The annual Campus Computing Survey, now in its 11th year, is based on data provided by campus officials, typically the senior technology officer (CIO/CTO, vice president for information technology, etc.) at 506 two- and four-year public and private colleges and universities across the United States. Participating institutions completed the survey during the summer and fall of 2000.

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